

is basically sound. With this knowledge at hand, the elaboration of detail in the act offered for adoption can go forward with considerable assurance.

Members of the Association are again reminded of the invitation expressed in previous comments, that any modifications or criticisms of the proposed law will be cordially welcomed; and such suggestions can be sent to the editor, who has been serving as the chairman of the special committee.

COUNTY HOSPITALS SHOULD PRINT ANNUAL REPORTS

The Massive Donation of Gratuitous Professional Services in County Hospitals.—In large metropolitan institutions for the care of the poor sick, such as the hospitals of San Francisco and Los Angeles counties, the number of patient visits and of major and minor surgical procedures made by attending staff members, who give gratuitous service to the institutions, is very large. For example, at the Los Angeles County Hospital,* for the fiscal year, July, 1933, to July, 1934, the total number of patients admitted were 48,849; the total number of patient days being 706,938, or an average of 14.4 days per patient. On the surgical services of the institution were listed 18,746 patients, and 9,309 operations were done. In addition to the large number of in-patients above mentioned, the out-patient service for ambulatory cases recorded a total number of 507,432 out-patient visits for the year, or about 1,390 out-patient visits per day. While it is true that the Los Angeles County Hospital has a large resident staff (about 125 internes, who are nearly always in residence), the great majority of the 48,849 hospital patients admitted during the last fiscal year were seen by members of the attending staff, and most of the major operative work was done by the attending surgeons. With a record of 706,938 in-patient days and a total of 9,309 operations, plus a total of 507,432 out-patient visits, to cover a period of twelve months, it is self-evident that the attending staff members, when they rendered that amount of gratuitous service, gave to the taxpayers of Los Angeles County nothing less than a massive donation. In terms of money, and at less than minimum fee table rates, the services thus donated would have an annual value of much more than one million dollars!—quite a contribution, and far in excess of what any other group of citizens donated to the taxpayers during the last year. In San Francisco and other counties of California similar expressions of altruistic medical service have also been in evidence from the time that the county hospitals were first established. It is good both to remember and to occasionally mention these facts when criticisms and attacks by salaried social service and so-called welfare experts are made

against the medical fraternity and the manner under which its members so unpretentiously do their work.

* * *

County Hospitals Should Print Annual Reports, with Money Evaluations of Professional Services Rendered.—Our special purpose in presenting the above summary is to emphasize the thought that when a group of citizens, such as an attending staff of a large public county hospital, each year give to the poor their professional services, amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars and without cost to the other taxpayers (who, however, themselves charge for everything they sell or do for the hospital or its patients), then in decency the least that the community should do would be to publish and distribute to civic organizations a printed report putting on record the professional services so rendered, and placing their money values squarely before the consideration of the people. Poor as some of the countries in Europe are supposed to be, they do provide funds for the publication of just such detailed reports of their hospitals, and the unselfish work of their respective staffs.

* * *

Non-existence of Such Printed Reports Responsible in Part for Lack of Appreciation of Altruistic Services Generously Rendered by the Medical Profession.—We are very much of the opinion that if in public hospitals of the United States in which attending staffs give, and give largely, such professional services, it had been stipulated from the beginning, as one of the conditions for the giving of such uncompensated service, that each institution should print an annual report in which the total money value of the professional services was indicated, then many members of the lay public and taxpayers would be more appreciative of what scientific medicine has been doing for their respective communities; and they would be far less than at the present in the mood to listen to specious reasoning and the vagaries of those who, misguided by insufficient appreciation of either the important professional or economic backgrounds involved, are insisting, with unseemly haste, on legislation leading nowhere unless to confusion.

* * *

Attending Staffs and County Medical Societies Should Give This Subject Their Attention.—For these and other reasons, the thought is suggested to attending staffs of county hospitals and to the respective county medical associations, that an effort might well be made to have every county hospital in California, through authorization by the board of supervisors, print an annual report; with statements therein, not only of the nature of professional services gratuitously rendered, but of the actual value of such donations expressed in terms of the world's money. Such reports would be of interest to many, and only good could result from the needed publicity.

* The "Los Angeles County Hospital" is the medical unit of the "Los Angeles County General Hospital," as explained in the December CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE, page 413.